

REPORT

One of the key aspects of my dissertation has to do with analyzing the determinants of urban crime. I recently completed a large review of the literature focused on the specific question about why crime is so high in many Latin American countries. In that particular context, Chile represents an interesting case of study since it has perhaps the lowest homicide rate but important levels in many property crimes such as robbery and larceny/thefts.

Perhaps one of the most significant challenges in the criminal research literature has to do with a clear understanding of the criminal justice system and what particular role each agency (should) play. In addition, many of the most promising research questions are increasingly demanding the use of high quality data. In that sense, the motivation for my recent trip to Chile was twofold. First, I wanted to have insights about the most important challenges in terms of crime control policies that are being taking place in the country. In addition, I met with specific governmental agencies in order to have access to administrative records regarding crime and criminal justice.

The current particular context of Chile is also very interesting. Besides its relatively low crime levels, crime control policies are clearly a priority for the population. Indeed, many recent polls have consistently ranked crime prevention policies as the first priority for the government. Any contribution in this area is crucial not only for research purposes. In particular, the extent to which the particular crime levels observed in Chile can be explained by specific policies in place is far from being conclusive. In fact, very little is known about the role different actors of the criminal justice system are playing and what kind of policies are making a real impact in terms of crime prevention.

During my visit I contacted key actors from multiple agencies. In terms of the criminal justice system I met with many agencies such as the Director of Research at the Undersecretary of Crime Prevention which described me the main initiatives the Government is leading in terms of crime prevention policies. I also met with the Director of Studies at the Justice Ministry with whom I explore the possibilities of studying many promising questions in terms of the criminal justice system in Chile. In addition, I met with the entire research team at the Prison guards' office (Gendarmería) which described me the main challenges they have in terms of data administration and public policy.

Perhaps more importantly, during this visit I explore the chance of having mutually collaborative projects with two important actors in the criminal justice system. In particular, I met with the Gral Secretary of the National Police (Carabineros) in order to initiate a research collaboration project. We aim to understand the pattern of urban crime, and in particular crime displacement. Crime displacement is a key topic in criminology and in particular in program evaluation. I believe that no progress in that research area can be made without access to high quality data. Since that meeting I have been working in two projects with the Department of Criminal Studies which is the specialized agency that analyzes important volumes of data regarding criminal activity in the whole country. This initiative seems to be very promising in terms of both research findings and public policy contributions.

In a similar way I met with an important agency from the criminal justice system and we are also working on a collaborative research project. The idea here is to understand the extent to which recent policies implemented in the entire country has deterred crime. This is a crucial question not only in Chile but elsewhere.

I am glad I had the chance to do this trip at this stage of my career which certainly has provided me valuable insight for these -and hopefully many future projects.

